



NAACP

March 26, 2020

The Honorable
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: NAACP SUPPORTS SWIFT ACTION ON ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE IN
RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC; URGES THAT WE CONTINUE TO HELP ALL
AMERICANS**

Dear Representative ,

On behalf of the NAACP, our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization, I urge you to support the swift passage and enactment of the latest response to the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, I urge you to support passage of the economic stimulus package as it passed the Senate last night, un-amended and by voice vote, so that it can be presented to the President for his signature as soon as possible. This will enable the provisions in the bill to begin to help the American people in these challenging, extraordinary, and unprecedented times even as much more needs to be done.

The Federal government must do all it can to ensure the well-being of all the American people, including those who may be in heretofore underserved, under-resourced, and marginalized communities. The bipartisan, bicameral hard work that went into the legislation before you on Friday demonstrates that our Nation can come together in a time of crisis, yet it is clear that this is only a down-payment. We must continue to work together.

The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act*, which has now been signed into law, was a first step toward supporting U.S. families through this global health emergency. At the time, everyone agreed that much more needed to be done. In response, the NAACP developed policy positions regarding our communities' basic needs with input from our grassroots network throughout the nation. The American people deserve truly representative Federal leadership.

First and foremost, there should be no waiver of anti-discrimination provisions in any supplemental funding deals or stimulus packages. We all need to know in this time of crisis our government is watching out for us, and will work for all of us, regardless of our stage or station in life. Such a waiver would call the government's commitment to equality and fairness into question, and would distract from any and all other provisions.

Specifically, all Americans deserve uniform high-quality and affordable health care access and coverage. We need to ensure increased funding for food assistance to meet the anticipated

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increase in demand caused by the pandemic. We further must guarantee that the mental health of everyone is protected and potentially treated in these times of isolation, crisis, and for too many people, despair.

We all deserve paid medical leave to support the workers and their families so they do not put themselves or others at additional risk of infection and so they can care for one another. Given that it is predicted that as many as one in three American workers may be unemployed due to the pandemic, we should guarantee adequate, easy-to-access unemployment assistance for all Americans, regardless of their status as a full time, part time, contractor, or self-employed worker

We must immediately address the needs of our children. To ensure every child, regardless of their age, where they live, or how much their family income may be, has full wireless internet access as well as the necessary educational resources is a must. Parents are faced with numerous challenges when their child's school is closed; how to keep up in their classwork should not be one of them.

All Federal, state and local environmental protection laws must continue to be upheld. Our current national disaster should not be an excuse for one down the line.

We must do all we can to protect our prison populations. This includes a dramatic increase in the emergency appropriation for public defenders across our nation; an immediate review of who is in prison, and why. If an individual is incarcerated and does not pose a threat to another person or to society as a whole, then he or she should be released from a scenario likely to become a "viral hotbox." This is especially true of people who are elderly, infirmed or in prison or jail simply because they cannot afford bond or bail. We also need to ensure that individuals released from prison have the necessary supports to protect themselves through expanded access to Medicaid and the removal of any barriers to public benefits or work/drug testing requirements based on a prior conviction. We need also need to ensure that we have adequate funding for emergency preparedness/disaster relief should jails and/or prison need to be evacuated.

Even prior to this crisis, too many Americans were experiencing too much of their paychecks going to repay student loans. A temporary relief is not a genuine relief. An individual who had to delay the purchase of their first home or their first car because of massive student debt is unlikely to regain their economic footing following this crisis in the immediate future. That is why total loan forgiveness for frontline defenders--government workers, first responders, teachers and those who work in the nonprofit sector-- in what is sure to be a long recovery is so important. It will have a positive impact on the economy and eliminate one additional burden for those who care for the nation in crisis.

Finally, we must also do all that is necessary to ensure that our democracy and our commitment to our Constitution stay strong. This means we must ensure that adequate funding has been made available to states to ensure every qualified American is allowed to cast a secret, unfettered ballot and that their vote is counted. Likewise, we must provide adequate funding to fully and fairly administer the 2020 Census, and to ensure everyone is counted.

We must use this crisis to demonstrate to heretofore underserved, under-resourced, and marginalized communities that the U.S. government cares, and that they are not forgotten. I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that our specific recommendations are included in a second, soon-to-be-drafted, economic stimulus package which will help all Americans. Thank you for your consideration of the NAACP's position. Should you have any questions or comments, or for more information about our explicit proposals, please do not hesitate to contact me or Hilary Shelton, Director NAACP Washington Bureau, and Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy at (202) 812-1909.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Derrick Johnson
President & CEO